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Hotel Executive Dies; Sniper Toll Up to 7

The death toll from the Jan. 7 sniper attack at the Downtown Howard Johnson Motor Hotel has grown to seven with the death of the hotel's general manager.

W. Sherwood Collins, 56, died last night at Charity Hospital. He had been in the hospital since the day of the shootings with a gunshot wound of the stomach.

Six persons were killed outright by sniper fire early in the shooting spree. Several others were wounded. The only known sniper, 23-year-old Mark Essex, died in a hail of police bullets on the roof of the 18-story building.

Essex also has been identified as the man who shot to death police cadet Alfred Harrell and wounded Ptn. Edwin Hosli on New Year's Eve. Hosli remains in critical condition at Charity.

A "STATUS REPORT" on the police investigation into the sniper incident will be issued next week, Police Supt. Clarence B. Giarrusso promised yesterday.

Giarrusso said from 30 to 50 police officers are devoting fulltime to the investigation and that a number of others are on the case parttime.

He said police still do not know if Essex acted alone or if there were other snipers involved.

The sniping incident, he said, is "unique in both its magnitude and its complexity." He said the police investigation must be thorough to stifle rumors and avoid the creation of further speculation.

GIARRUSSO SAID officers are making every effort to obtain signed statements from every person involved in the incident and the events which preceded it.

Collins was executive vice president

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of Civic Center Site Development Co., executive vice president of Downtown Parking Inc. and a member of the board of directors of the National Parking Association.

He served as a member of the national Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge Council, the national Howard Johnson's Restaurant Council and the New Orleans Rotary Club.

Funeral services were held today for Collins at the Tharp-Sontheimer-Tharp funeral home. Interment was in Metairie Cemetery.

Mr. Collins, a graduate of Tulane, was active in the university's alumni association.

Survivors include his widow, Mrs. Theone Collins; a brother, Robert A. Collins of New Orleans; a daughter, Mrs. Thomas Baker of Athens, Tenn.; a son, Walter S. Collins Jr. of Houma, and two grandchildren.